



**Office of Public Affairs  
U.S. Embassy, Wellington**

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**MACHINE-READABLE PASSPORTS REQUIRED FOR VISA WAIVER PROGRAM**

In an important change that will affect some New Zealanders traveling to the United States, beginning October 1, 2003 citizens of all countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) who wish to enter the United States visa-free must present a machine-readable passport (MRP). MRPs use new technologies that make them more secure from tampering than old-style passports. Many countries, including New Zealand, already have begun to replace their expiring old-style passports with new MRPs.

Most New Zealand citizens already hold MRPs issued by the New Zealand government and will continue to enjoy the benefits of the VWP as before. But those who still hold old-style passports will need to replace them with MRPs by October 1 if they wish to continue traveling to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program.

After October 1, New Zealand citizens holding old-style passports may enter the United States (other than for transit purposes) **only** if they hold a valid U.S. non-immigrant visa. Travelers applying for a visa to enter the United States are **not** required to obtain MRPs.

New Zealand citizens may apply for visas at the U.S. Consulate General in Auckland or at other U.S. embassies and consulates around the world. The application process can be lengthy, however, and usually includes a personal interview with a Consular officer. Applicants should apply for a visa well in advance of planned travel to the United States.

Non-machine-readable passports will remain valid for Transit Without Visa (TWOV) purposes. TWOV and VWP are separate, distinct statuses.

Families and groups should obtain individual passports for each traveler, including infants. MRPs typically have biometric data for only one traveler in the machine-readable zone and families may be denied visa-free entry into the U.S. if the biometric data for only one traveler is machine-readable.

27 countries participate in VWP: Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brunei, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, San Marino, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

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